

ABS Labour Statistics: A broad range of information

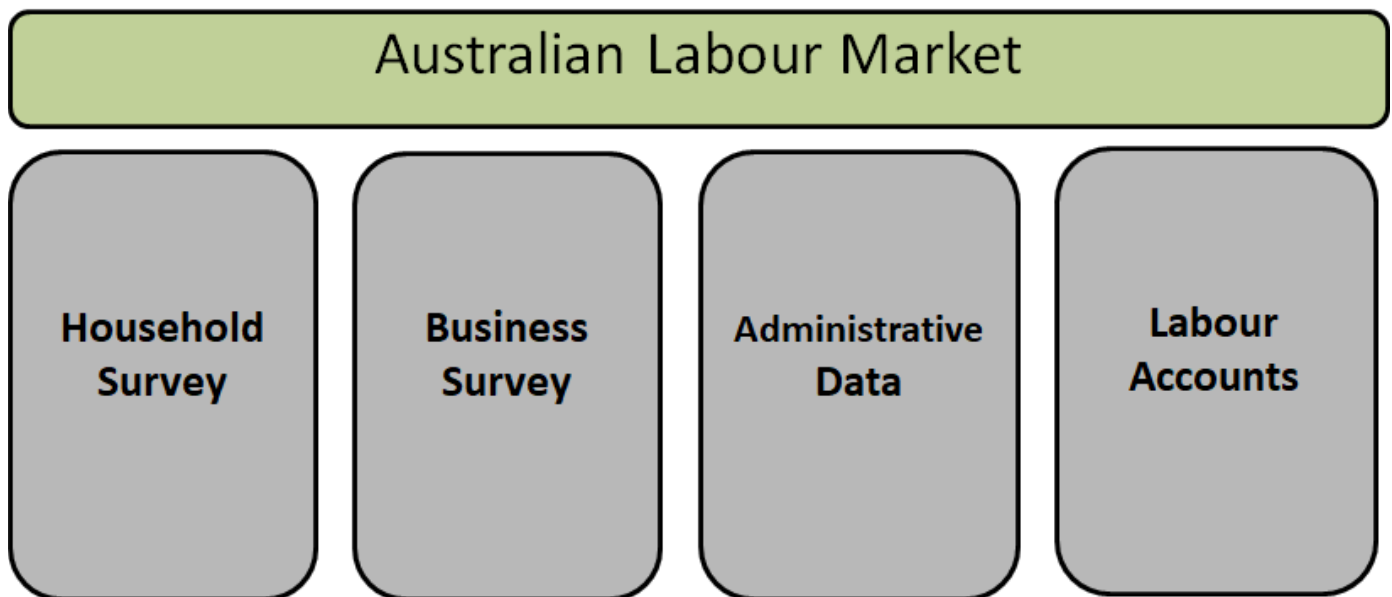
Labour statistics are some of Australia's most important economic and social statistics. Put simply, they provide information about people and their participation in the labour market, their success in finding employment, their earnings and other benefits, their type of work, their working hours and conditions.

Given the importance of high quality information on the Australian labour market, the ABS produces a broad range of labour statistics, drawn from a wide range of different sources. Some of these sources are very well known, such as the monthly Labour Force Survey, but others are less well known – particularly new collections like the annual Jobs in Australia and the quarterly Labour Account.

A simple way of visualising this is to consider that ABS labour statistics are drawn from four key “pillars” of data, each of which is a bit different, but which provide complementary insights into the labour market.

Each of these pillars – the two traditional sources of household and business surveys, and the two more recent pillars of administrative data based statistics and Labour Account - provides important and unique insights to enable Australians to better understand their labour market.

Figure 1. The Four Pillars of ABS Labour Statistics



Household surveys

A household survey approaches individual households to complete questions about their individual, family or household circumstances.

The key household survey that provides vital information about Australia's labour market is the Labour Force Survey, and its related supplementary surveys.

Business surveys

Business surveys collect a broad range of information from businesses, including their performance, financial position or about jobs and employees.

Key business surveys with a labour market focus include Job Vacancies, Employee Earnings and Hours Average Weekly Earnings and the Wage Price Index.

Administrative data

Administrative data refers to information maintained by governments and other entities that is made available to the ABS for statistical purposes. It includes data used for registrations, transactions and record keeping, usually during the delivery of a service.

The ABS publishes employment information from the Linked Employer Employee Dataset (LEED), using Australian Tax Office information and ABS data. As a result, the LEED includes more than 100 million tax records over six consecutive years between 2011-12 and 2016-17, and provides information for over 2,200 different regions based on a person's usual residence.

Labour Account

The Labour Account brings together data from separate administrative, business, and household sources, adjusting and confronting the various sources until a coherent picture of the labour market is established. It provides data on the number of employed persons, the number of jobs, hours worked and income earned for each industry. It provides the best labour market estimates for the 19 industry divisions each quarter and 86 industries annually.

Which data source should you be using?

Often there is only a single statistical data source on the ABS website that will include the information that you are after. However, for many labour market topics it is often the case that the ABS produces multiple statistics, each drawn from a different data source to enable different types of analysis. They provide important, complementary economic and social insights into the labour market, which is large, complex and dynamic.

It is therefore important to be guided by what you are looking to understand about the labour market. Is it to understand a topic where:

- demographic characteristics are important or it may related to an activity outside of employment? Household surveys are often useful for this.
- specific employer or payroll information is important? Business surveys are often useful for this.
- detailed sub-population or geographic information is important? This is usually best sourced from administrative data, or the five-yearly Census.
- a comprehensive 'best estimate' of key labour market indicators (based on reconciled information from all of the available data sources) is important? The Labour Account Is designed to provide this.

For example, in seeking to understand how many people are employed in jobs in Australia, you could use statistics from:

- Monthly *Labour Force* – which provides a timely indicator on changes in employment, unemployment and underemployment, including analysis by personal characteristics such as sex, age, occupation and employment status.
- The quarterly *Labour Account* – which is the best source of headline information on employment by industry. It provides an estimate of the number of jobs, hours worked, and associated labour income.
- The annual *Jobs in Australia* – which provides granular information on all the job relationship for more than 2,200 different regions across Australia. This rich dataset is based on more than 100 million individual records which allow for micro-data analysis of the Australian labour market.

Another common example is seeking to understand changes in wages over time, where you could use statistics from:

- Quarterly *Wage Price Index* - which measures changes in the price of labour in the Australian labour market. In a similar manner to the CPI, the WPI follows price changes in a fixed "basket" of jobs and is therefore not affected by changes in quality and quantity of work..
- The twice yearly *Average Weekly Earnings* - which provides data on average wages by industry, which provides insights into compositional changes in earnings over time.
- The two yearly *Employee Earnings and Hours* - which provides detailed data on methods of setting pay, hours paid for and detailed distributional earnings information.
- The annual *Characteristics of Employment* – which provides earnings by detailed socio-demographic and other characteristics.
- The quarterly Compensation of Employees measure in the *National Accounts* and quarterly measure of labour income in the *Labour Account* – which provide aggregate earnings measures,

Labour Data Sources

Below is a list of some of the key labour statistics collections, organised into the pillars. In addition to improving the visibility of all of the available labour statistics, the ABS is also exploring how to better organise labour market information around themes and topics. This is being actively explored as part of the design of its new website, which will be launched in June 2020.

Household surveys

Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0) - Monthly
Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001) – Monthly
Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)
Characteristics of Employment, Australia (cat. no. 6333.0) - Annually
Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia (cat. no. 6226.0) – Annually
Education and Work, Australia (cat. no. 6227.0) - Annually
Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia (cat. no. 6250.0) – 4 yearly
Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia (cat. no. 6239.0) – 2 yearly
Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia (cat. no. 6238.0) – 2 yearly

Business surveys

Job Vacancies, Australia (cat. no. 6354.0) - Quarterly
Industrial Disputes, Australia (cat. no. 6321.0.55.001) - Quarterly
Average Weekly Earnings (cat. no. 6302.0) – 6 monthly
Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (cat. no. 6306.0) – 2 yearly
Wage Price Index, Australia (cat. no. 6345.0) - Quarterly
Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia (cat. no. 6248.0.55.002) - Annually
Australian Industry (cat. no. 8155.0) - Annually
Labour Costs, Australia (cat. no. 6348.0) – 5 yearly

Administrative data

Jobs in Australia (cat. no. 6160.0) - Annually
Estimates of Personal Income for Small Areas (cat. no. 6524.0.55.002) - Annually

Labour Account

Labour Account Australia (cat. no. 6150.0.55.003) - Quarterly

The ABS continues to strengthen the suite of labour market statistics, to ensure that Australia can effectively understand how its labour market, economy and society are changing over time and make informed decisions.

This page last updated 15 April 2020

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